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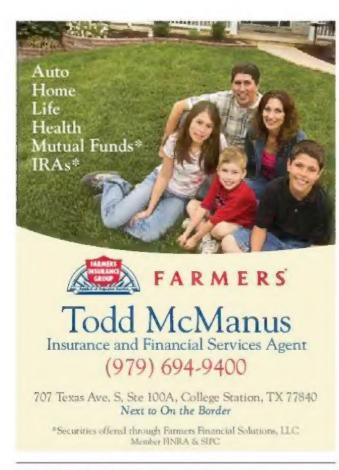
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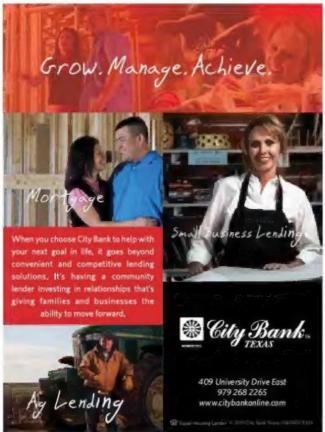
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FIND THE 01

On the Cover: Junior Jeff Fuller makes his record-breaking catch against Oklahoma State. Photo by Jason McConnell '01.





publisher'snote

Howdy!

September was a busy month here in Aggieland as we kicked off another exciting year of Texas A&M Athletics.

Despite a few matches that didn't go their way, the Aggie soccer team appears to be as strong as expected and should challenge Oklahoma State for the Big 12 crown. And while some conference hardware is first on the to do list, this program has its sights set on going all the way to the Women's College Cup.

Meanwhile, the Aggie volleyball team has been the surprise of the fall thus far and if they finish strong, they could find themselves near the top of the Big 12 – quite an accomplish considering the lack of experience on the roster.

Then, there's football. The Ags came so close to finishing the month of September with a perfect record. A last second field goal by Oklahoma State ruined that, but this team should be exciting to watch the rest of the season.

Speaking of football, there are two members of the A&M program I want to recognize for their performance so far this season. The first one made our cover this month – Jeff Fuller.

The junior wide receiver has been phenomenal so far this season, making play after play all over the field while breaking one of the oldest school records along the way. Fuller must give opposing defensive coordinators nightmares with the way he can go up and catch anything thrown his way. He regularly makes defensive backs look silly when he beats them to the ball. If I was calling plays, I'd say keep throwing it to No. 8 until the defense finds a way to stop him.

And speaking of defense, Tim Deruyter is the other member of the program who I wanted to recognize in this note. Like many Aggie fans, I had high expectations for our new defensive coordinator, but he's already gone above and beyond what I imagined. I'm trying not to get ahead of myself because there's a lot of football left to be played, but what he has done since arriving on campus last spring is nothing short of amazing. Coach Deruyter has a great scheme in place and is very sharp, but what impresses me the most is how quickly he got the A&M defenders to buy in and perform in his system at a high level. They look extremely comfortable with what he asks them to do and you can tell that they believe they are a great defense. Simply put, he has quickly instilled a tremendous amount of confidence in a group that has been severely lacking confidence for a long, long time.

While the defense is not elite just yet, I have faith that they can play well enough to give the Ags a chance to win every game on the schedule this year. And if they keep improving their fanatical effort that Coach Deruyter has been preaching all fall, this still could be a special year for Aggie football.

Gig'em Ags!

Brin '01

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Aggieland

EDITORIAL

Brian Davis '01

Fubisher Editor

brian Gaggiernag com

Jeremy Ksionda '04 Managing Editor jeremy Gaggiernag com Jason McConnell '01 Associate Editor/Photo Editor jason@agglemag.com

ADVERTISING

Rob Havens *88 Advertising Sales Manager (979) 229-8046 rob@aggarnag.com

PRODUCTION/CIRCULATION

Kimberly Davis '01 kim@aggiemag.com Sunnye Davis sunnye aggiernag com

COPY EDITORS

Shawn Kruse '02 bowleriox@aggiemag.com Katie McConnell '09 katie Gaggiernag com

ASSISTANT TO THE MANAGING EDITOR

Stacey Ksionda '05 stacey@aggiemag.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Lyssa Hamilton '99 lyssa@aggiemag.com

Gentry "Scoop" Woodard scoop@aggemag.com

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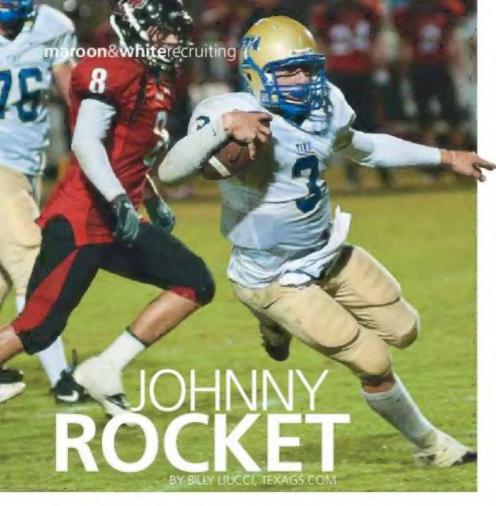




09.11.10

Fans in the upper level of the Zone get an up-close look at the F-18 flyover. Aggieland displayed it's core values once again on Patriot Day. Selected members of military, law enforcement, firefighters, EMS and Texas Task Force One were recognized with "First Responders Day" at Kyle Field. Photo by Jason Mc-Connell '01 (Inset by Brian Davis '01).





In late June, Kerrville Tivy quarterback Johnny Manziel had found his fit, choosing the Oregon Ducks and Chip Kelly's high-powered attack. Manziel's original decision was put to the test about a month ago, however, when Texas A&M and head coach Mike Sherman officially extended an offer following Tivy's season-opening victory.

A week later, Manziel was at Kyle Field watching the Aggies win their own season-opener. He returned with his parents for A&M's second and third games as well. Manziel and his family wrapped up each trip with extensive Sunday conversations with Sherman at the Bright Complex. During those meetings, the quarterback, his family and the Aggie head coach formed a bond that quickly made the idea of playing big-time college football in his home state a very real possibility. In fact, Manziel knew what he was going to do before he left College Station that Sunday... and may have known the answer a week prior to that.

"I talked to Sean Porter after [the FIU] game and I already knew what my decision was going to be, I just couldn't tell anyone because I had to tell Oregon first," explained the young quarterback who is all class on and off the field.

Manziel was going to do things the right way, which meant he wanted to call Kelly and the Ducks' staff before making things official with Sherman and the Aggies.

"I talked with the staff at Oregon and it was a rough deal," he admitted. "They took it very tough and even after talking to them, I still don't know if they understand why. But I understand why, my family understands why, and it is the right decision. I didn't think distance would be that big of a deal, but it tugged at me and I had to give my family a chance to watch me play."

Manziel continued, "It feels great to have everything over and done with. I have thought about this for a while now and, after this last game, I knew where I wanted to be."

Ironically enough, the Ags' surprising struggle against FIU put Texas A&M in an even more positive light as far as the dynamic signal-caller was concerned.

"On the last trip, the fan base let me

know why there is so much tradition," he said. "Even though A&M didn't play well, there were still 80,000 fans rooting for them when they were down 20-6."

The Ags evaluated the 6-1, 195-pounder in the spring and saw a terrific athlete whose 4.4 speed and ability to make things happen with the ball in his hands had several schools eyeballing him as a wide receiver. At the time, the Aggies viewed Manziel as a quarterback but decided to roll the dice and wait to see how things shook out during the early portion of his senior season. Well, it took all of one game - a 400-yard, seven-touchdown effort in three quarters of action in a season-opening win over Fredericksburg - for Sherman and Aggie quarterbacks coach Tom Rossley to reach their decision: Manziel had emerged as THE quarterback they wanted to sign in the 2010 class.

Manziel's string of amazing performances continued in wins over San Antonio powers Madison and Cibolo Steele and in a close loss to defending 4A State Champion Lake Travis. In the three contests, the dual-threat signal-caller put up absolutely ridiculous totals of 1,126 yards through the air and 481 rushing while accounting for a total of 18 touchdowns. Take another look at those numbers for a second and then consider the fact that Manziel did it against three of the better high school football teams in Texas.

Through four games this fall, Manziel led the Antiers to a 3-1 record while accounting for nearly 90% of Tivy's total offense. He was 107-of-164 passing (65% completion rate) for 1,399 yards and 15 TD's. On the ground, Manziel had already amassed 612 yards and 10 TD's on 82 carries (7.5 yards per attempt).

Last year, the blue-chip QB threw for 2,782 yards, 19 TD's and 5 interceptions on 211-of-349 passing while running for 1,529 yards and 33 scores on 232 carries. Manziel also caught 5 passes for 152 yards and 2 scores.

The numbers show that Manziel is truly a unique and special talent, but you will appreciate his skillset as a quarterback even more when you pop in the tape. He is a magician when running the football and is a very accurate passer possessing underrated arm strength. More than anything else, Manziel is a "next level" leader and a winner. As a junior, he led the Antlers to the 4A Division II Semi-Finals and



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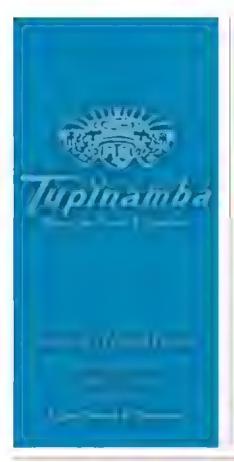


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a 13-2 record - Tivy's deepest playoff run in over 20 years.

Because he can run and throw the ball with equal effectiveness and is such a tremendous athlete, Manziel should be an ideal fit in the Ags' current offensive system. From an athletic standpoint, he's actually very similar to Ryan Tannehill. Not surprisingly, Sherman and the Aggies have even talked to Manziel about the possibility of getting reps at wide receiver as a true freshman when Tannehill takes over as A&M's starting quarterback as a senior.

Now that Manziel has made things official with the Aggies, he's ready to focus on his senior season and just being a senior in high school and is looking forward to arriving at Texas A&M.

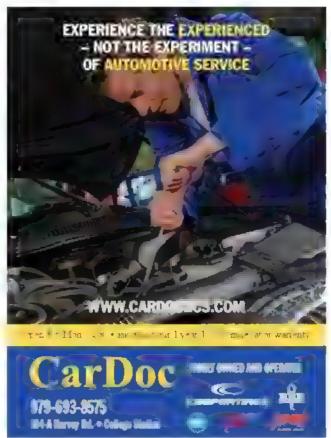
"I love A&M," he said. "With all of the attention on the games, the schools and my school work, it was getting tough to balance things out without making a decision. Back in the summer, I thought the entire recruiting process was over with, but now that I have committed to A&M, there are absolutely no other visits. If I could sign the letter-of-intent tomorrow, I would."

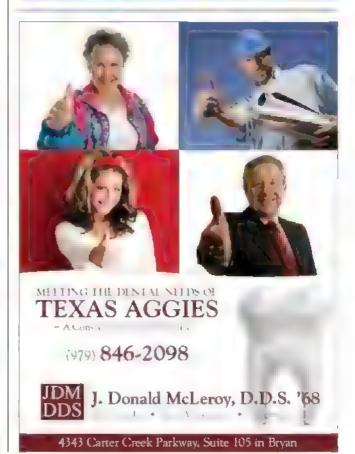
An impact senior who has taken the Texas high school football scene by storm over the past year or so, Manziel is very well-known in recruiting circles, particularly in the San Antonio area and with wide receivers across the state. With his decision behind him, Manziel plans to become one of the Aggies' top recruiters.

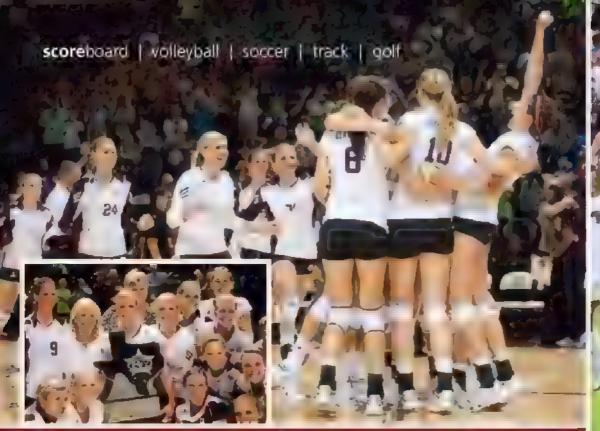
"Aaron Green (S.A. Madison's nationally-ranked tailback) is my boy," he said. "I love him to death. And I think it means a lot when he tells me that A&M has moved into his top-5. I will definitely be talking to him about A&M. I think I have made a lot of friends across the state and I will definitely talk to everyone about Texas A&M and try to get some other players to come to College Station with me and the rest of our class."

Manziel became the Ags' 12th 2010 commitment and is the fourth A&M pledge to switch from another school. He probably won't be the last, either, as the Ags are making up for a slow start due in large part to five coaching changes since the end of the '09 season.

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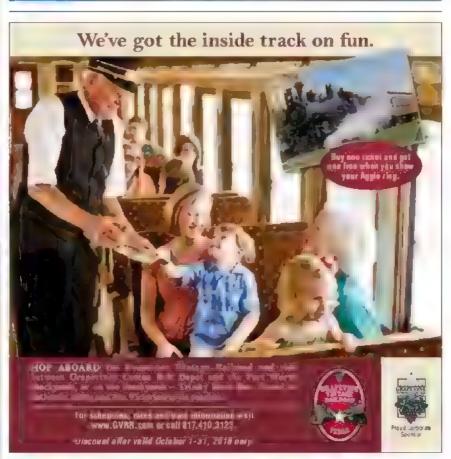


















BEAR Sarah Grace's journey to Aggieland BY JASON MCCONNELL '01

Sarah Grace started playing volleyball for the Texas Elite club team in the 7th grade. Coaches Bethany Medford and Kristin Odell lit the spark that motivated her to pursue volleyball. Moving towards high school, Coach Frankie Velez took over developing Grace into the player she is today.

"He taught me everything I know about volleyball offensively and defensively," she admits.

At Stratford High School, Grace's star started to shine. She was voted All-State as an outside hitter both her junior and senior years, and All-American her senior year. She led her team to three straight district championships.

When colleges started calling, she had a tough decision to make. Texas A&M was her first love.

"It may sound silly, but as a kid in high school, my dream was to be on the A&M volleyball team," she said.

Unfortunately, A&M was recruiting her to be a defensive specialist. When Baylor offered her a position as an outside hitter, she decided that was where she wanted to go.

At Baylor, she continued to excel, being named to the 2007 Big 12 All-Freshman team and leading the Bears with 4.3 digs per set. But she was not happy. After going home for Christmas that year, she decided not to return to Waco. Grace enrolled at the University of Houston for the remainder of her freshman year.

Before her sophomore year, Grace transferred to Texas A&M. She met with the coaches when she got on campus and started the process of getting back into volleyball. However, after the paperwork was completed, she discovered that she had a problem with her shoulder. She needed surgery for a torn labrum and rotator cuff.

"I didn't know if I was going to come back to volleyball or not," Grace admits. "Surgery was not so I could play volleyball again; it was just to be healthy."

For the next year, Grace was in rehab, working to get her shoulder healthy again. It also enabled her to be involved in activities other than sports at A&M, including joining Delta-Delta-Delta so-

"I was able to experience all of A&M I wanted to," she said.

Grace finally joined the A&M team in the spring of 2010. Classified as the only

senior on the team at the start of the season, along with her experiences at Baylor, she immediately fell into a leadership role on the team.

"The girls definitely look up to me to in pressure situations for me to stay calm," Grace said. "Some of the girls call me 'Mama Bear."

For Grace, stepping onto the court for the first time as an Aggie was worth the wait.

"The first day in the uniform I was like a kid in a candy story," she admitted. "It was just surreal. It was awesome."

Texas A&M head coach Laurie Corbelli was also happy with Grace's growth.

"After two years off, Sarah has reestablished her game in somewhat of a different role," Corbelli said. "Her shoulder injury took away an excellent jump serve, but she is back doing great things on the court and definitely strengthens our defense."

Since she left Baylor midway through her freshman year, she technically broke her National Letter of Intent agreement, causing her to have an NCAA-mandated year off. And since she transferred to a school within the same conference, she had to take an additional year off. Grace and the coaches, along with the A&M compliance office, appealed the decisions to the NCAA. While on their way to Kansas for a match on September 17, the Aggies found out the NCAA granted her an additional year of eligibility. She was immediately reclassified as a junior.

"Being a student-athlete takes a lot of work and it is a huge commitment, but she recognizes and appreciates the many rewards and doesn't take things for granted," Coach Corbelli said. "It couldn't have happened to a more deserving athlete."







Nearly every season since its inception in 1993, the Aggie soccer program has had a unique family tradition on its roster. It began with Tania and Linda Castillejos in the mid 90s and continued with Amy and Carrie Berend, Linda and Sarah Pierson and Natalie and Cydne Currie in the 2000s. Amber and Lyndsey Gnatzig make up the latest sisters to play together on this year's squad.

Both first generation Aggies, the Gnatzig girls began playing soccer at a very young age. Their parents were track runners, so naturally they encouraged Amber and Lyndsey to try various sports, with one exception.

"We weren't allowed to be cheerleaders," Amber joked. "But we tried just about every sport and soccer stuck."

A standout at Humble High School, Amber arrived in Aggieland in 2006. She had played for Aggie assistant coach Phil Stephenson on an Olympic Development Program (ODP) team, but never really thought about playing for Texas A&M before her first recruiting trip. However, the moment she stepped on campus, Amber knew she was going to be an Aggie.

"I was blown away by the team, the atmosphere, the school – I could go on and on," she said. "I couldn't find any negatives across the board. I knew I was going here immediately."

Lyndsey, also a standout soccer player in Humble, joined her sister on the team last season.

"The coaches are awesome, the girls are awesome – it's very welcoming and homey," Lindsey said. "And it didn't hurt that my sister was here. That might have had a little something to do with it."

"When Lyndsey got here, I started calling her 'Sis' and then so did everyone else," Amber added. "At first, I was like, 'hey, that's my sister!" But now it's worn

SOCCET "It was year and SISTERS

Amber and Lyndsey
Gnatzig continue an
Aggie soccer family
tradition by BRIAN DAVIS '01



on me so I allow it."

Prior to college, the girls had only played together for one season when Amber was a senior in high school and Lyndsey was a freshman. And if everything had gone according to plan, the 2009 season would have been the one and only year they played together at A&M.

Entering last season, Lyndsey was a true freshman trying to make a name for herself on the talent-laden Aggie roster, while Amber was a senior captain poised for an All-Big 12 season. Seven games in, Amber suffered a knee injury that put an end to her season. Fortunately, it happened so early in the season it enabled her to redshirt.

"It was really hard being injured last year and redshirting," Amber admits. "It

was a blessing in disguise though to be able to play this fifth year. And I previously had the same injury on my other knee, so I rehab it and knew my limits.

knew how to rehab it and knew my limits. That helped me come back quicker and stronger.

Lyndsey was excited to have another year to play with her big sister as well.

The sisters have gotten much closer to each other since Lyndsey came to College Station.

"Now we live 2 streets away from each other and are always over at each other's house," Lyndsey said. "She always wants to come over and hang out with me."

"She's got that backwards," Amber added. "But we do hang out with each other quite a bit. It's been awesome playing together. We weren't the closest when we were in high school, but I can say she's definitely my best friend. Just being able to play with her and have this extra year is really neat."

On the field, the Gnatzig sisters play different positions and bring unique skills to the team. Amber is more technical, while Lyndsey plays with more speed. Off the field, they are a lot alike. They have the same laugh and a similar personality and sense of humor. However, they have a few differences, too.

"You could say Lindsey is one of the messier girls on the team," Amber said. "When it comes to eating, we always laugh because she is always the one with food around her mouth. Sometimes we have to get her a hib."



"Sometimes I'll be eating and I'll look up and all the girls are staring at me," Lindsey said. "I start thinking, oh no, not again. It's something I have to work on.

"We still love her," Amber added.

Meanwhile, the girls give Amber a hard time for how she treats her dog. Mia is a West Highland Terrior that Amber's boyfriend gave her two years ago.

"She's awesome," Amber said. "The girls make fun of me because I treat her like a person."

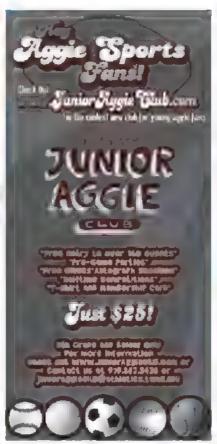
Amber even threw Mia a birthday party Some of the other girls on the team brought their dogs over.

"It might have been a little extreme, but it was fun," she said.

"Mia sleeps in the bed with her," Lyndsey added. "That's her princess. If Mia's not comfortable, she makes me leave."

One thing is certain. The Gnatzig sisters are great representatives of the family tradition in the Aggie program. Lyndsey's career at A&M is just taking off, while Amber's is winding down.

"Now I'm playing every game like it's my last," Amber said. "I have a different perspective. I have that much more to play for." M







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ASON MCCOMMELL Y

PART OF THE CREW

Linebackers like Aggie sophomore Sean Porter are key to resurrecting the Wrecking Crew



On the third play of the Aggies' season opener, Stephen F. Austin quarterback Jeremy Moses dropped back to pass and threw a quick slant to his right to receiver Anthony Foster. It appeared Foster would make the catch and pick up the third down conversion just across midfield. But when the ball arrived, so did outside linebacker Scan Porter. Delivering a jarring hit, Porter leveled the Lumberjack receiver, knocking the ball away and forcing an incompletion.

The hit caused an eruption in Kyle Field for a fanbase longing for the return of the Wrecking Crew. While the Crew isn't back just yet, Porter's big play made a great first impression for new coordinator Tim DeRuyter's 3-4 defense.

A sophomore from Clemens HS in Schertz, TX, Porter was

one of seven true freshmen to appear in all 13 games last season, starting two of them. He steadily improved throughout the season as a key contributor on special teams and was one of the first defenders off the bench playing behind Garrick Williams.

"Coming in last summer, I think I was fourth string at outside linebacker," Porter recalled, "but I knew I could play. I just kept working hard and listened to everything G [Garrick] had to say. He really helped me a lot and taught me the position even though I was pushing him for his starting spot."

Porter started playing football at age seven in Pensacola, FL. His dad was in the military, which for most families means a lot of moving around. Porter was no different, having lived in Oklahoma and Louisiana in addition to Florida and Texas. He played



football at each stop along the way at positions all over the field, but in Schertz, Porter found a home at linebacker.

Because he moved around so much, Porter didn't have a favorite school or team he pulled for growing up. He had scen a few A&M games on TV when Reggie McNeal was the quarterback, but that was about it as far as his connection with the Aggies

However, when the A&M coaching staff started recruiting Porter during his junior year, they quickly noticed his great speed and instincts at the linebacker position. They watched tape and invited him to camps to see him in person. At a university with a rich tradition of linebackers, he clearly fit the mold. When Mike Sherman called to offer him a scholarship that May, Porter didn't waste much time before commutting.

"I was sitting in my high school coach's office when Coach Sherman called and offered me," Porter recalled. "I called my dad and told him and he told me to call Sherman back and commit right then. I had been thinking about it a long time before then though. Coach Sherman and I had talked about all the great linebackers that have played here and I wanted to be a part of that."

Entering spring practice this year, Porter and the rest of the Aggie defense started over with a new coordinator and a new scheme. For Porter, it also meant a new position to learn – SAM (strongside) linebacker.

"My role in the defense is to be great in coverage all the time and be a sure tackler," he said. "I have to set the edge of the field. I have to keep everything contained and push things back to those great middle linebackers that we have."

He didn't waste any time asserting himself and quickly locked down the starting job during the spring. And just three games into his sophomore season, Porter has already become an integral part of the defense and appears to be a future leader on the field.

"In this 3-4 defense, when you can have guys like Sean and Von [Miller], it can really create some problems for other teams," Coach Deruyter said. "Sean steps up his game every week. He's a guy who can slide out and cover or we can bring him off the edge. I've said all along, we think he's an excellent football player and we have very high expectations of him."

No, the Wrecking Crew isn't back just yet, but with linebackers like Porter on the field, it will be sooner rather than later.

SEAN PORTER BEFORE THE SNAP

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TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [GAME 1: AGS 48, SFA 7]



♦PHOTO OF THE GAME

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TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [GAME 2: AGS 48, LOUISIANA TECH 16]



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O&A WITH DAMONTRE MOORE

What has led to your success this season? A will indices to learn igneat coaches and great to a coaches and great

What is it like learning from Von Miller?
It is amazing. To have the nation's sack lead...
It is also is pretty special in a great mechanism.

What other schools were you interested in and why did you choose Texas A&M?

FROM PROTECT P

When did you commit to A&M?

this before spring footballof my year I had just this hed a practice and I included a practice a

Are you surprised with how much you're playing this season?

What position did you play in high school and how does the Joker position compare?

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▲ PHOTO OF THE GAME

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O&A WITH CYRUS GRAY How have you progressed since you got to

A&M? port of which the first C A Lake Take To the contract of the Contract

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What is it like playing for Coach Jordan?

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How do you and Christine Michael compliment each other on the football field?

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and the estimated made as compre Tr sch the c f + (and p + cratara cra fr t FOR FREE PARTY defenders Heldos hall a stanlex en but he ascilikes ip and the built

What is your relationship like off the field?

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How often do people try to knock it out of your hands?

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TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [GAME 4: OKLAHOMA ST. 38, AGS 35]



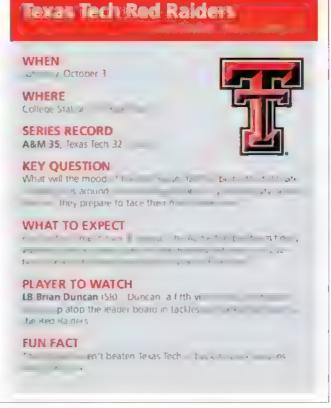
SON MCCDNINELL TO

TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [OCTOBER GAME PREVIEWS]









dustin HARIS

Nine questions for the Aggies' sophomore cornerback BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

What is your current role on defense?

Were you surprised to be starting as a freshman last season?

reah, I was surprised. We were short

h Mac fold me that if I worke

thought all the median folders are short and the median plant and the median plant are short and the median plant are

Is punt returner the toughest position on the field?

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How quickly do you have to make that decision?

In the Louisiana Tech game, what was it like going from the lowest point of a fumbled punt return to the highest point of returning one for a touchdown?

tival entire nivelability established to be successful (was the pull) son, but hadn't practice in months for come in and droj it is to the following the pull to t

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What other schools were you interested in and why did you choose Texas A&M?

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What sort of things do you do on the farm?

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What is it like playing for Coach McMillian?

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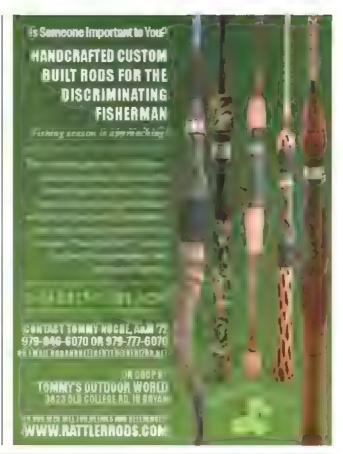
What makes this defense so effective?

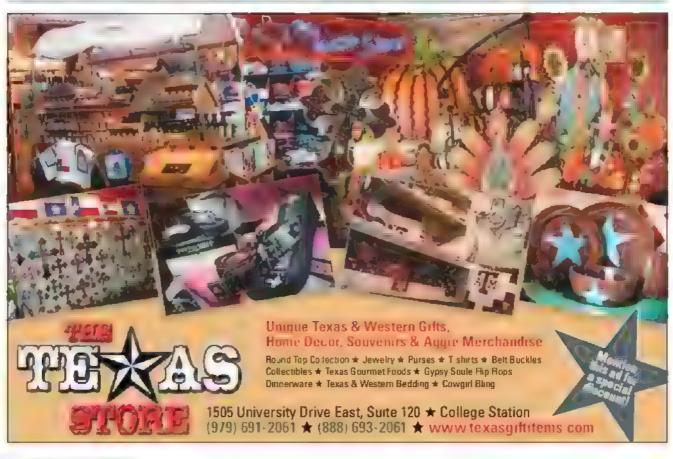
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THE FUTURE OF THE BIG 12

(for now)

Summer 2010 will forever be remembered as the summer of what could have been (well, maybe not forever, but at least until the whole conference realignment debacle decides to rear its ugly head again). For Nebraska and Colorado, big changes are on the horizon, as the Huskers and Buffaloes await their schedules against an all-new set of conference opponents.

For the remaining members of the Big 12, it's a good thing they all decided to stick together, because they're going to be seeing a lot more of each other on the gridiron. Gone is the old championship game format, where winners of the north and south divisions squared off against one another for rights to a BCS berth.

Under the new scheduling format, all ten teams will face each

other on a yearly basis, alternating between home and home sites, just like the current divisional format. That means nine conference games a year instead of the current eight, cutting one non-conference game off the schedule.

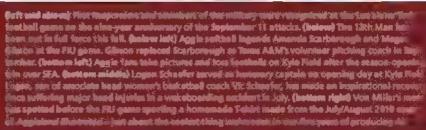
So what does all that mean for the Aggres? On the surface, it's nothing more than a chance at an easier route to six wins and a bowl berth. Or on a deeper level, perhaps it's a second chance at a conference that hasn't been kind to the maroon and white since the early years of its inception.

Here's a look at what's in store for the Aggres in 2011 and beyond. Throw in the Southwest Classic against Arkansas that is expected to run through at least 2018, and you know all but two games a year on the schedule for the foreseeable future.









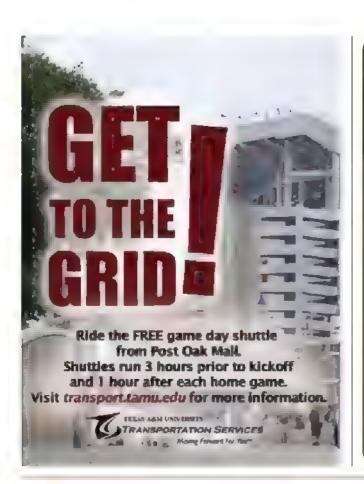














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men's SOCCER

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

When people think of soccer at Texas A&M, they typically think of the nationally ranked Aggie women's team, and rightfully so. After all, Coach G Guerneri has built the A&M program from scratch into one of the elite programs in the nation. But what a lot of soccer and general Aggie sports fans don't know is that there's another top-flight program in town – the Texas A&M men's soccer club.

Established over 20 years ago, the men's soccer club is a student run organization in the Department of Recreational Sports at Texas A&M University. The team competes with schools across the state in the Texas Collegiate Soccer League. The league includes some of the Aggies' traditional opponents like Baylor, Texas Tech and the University of Texas. Club president Allen Hamilton '13 says the Longhorns are naturally the team's biggest rivals.

"It comes with the territory," Hamilton says. "Texas is probably the second best team in the state - after us."

Around 100 students attend the team's tryouts each August for a spot on the 50-man roster. Hamilton wishes they didn't have to cut anyone, but it isn't financially feasible to accept more than 50. Those who make the cut are divided into an A and B team, assuring everyone an opportunity to play.

The club competes at a very high level. Many of the players passed up opportunities to play at schools with NCAA soccer programs because they wanted to come to Texas A&M for whatever reason. Hamilton falls in that category. He played for the University of Dallas his freshman year before transferring to Texas A&M.

"Being an Aggie was too important for me to pass up," he said. Not only are the Aggies traditionally the best club team in





Texas, they consistently advance to the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association National Championship tournament. Last year, they advanced to the Elite 8 before losing to eventual national champion Weber State. In 2003 and 2005, Texas A&M brought the national championship home to Aggieland. The tournament, held in Phoenix, AZ last year, typically makes a big dent in the club's budget.

"We fund everything we do with annual dues," Hamilton said.
"We appreciate any kind of financial support we can get."

While the team is extremely impressive to watch on the field, their most significant event occurs annually on the golf course – the Danny Kenney Memorial Golf Tournament. A former player from the 1990's, Kenney passed away at the age of 29 after losing a battle with brain cancer. In 2000, Kenney's family and friends initiated the tournament to help support the club and provide scholarships to members.

"Danny's family comes out every year for the tournament and it's just a great event," Hamilton said.

This annual fundraiser supplements the generous donations from Kenney's friends and family and has resulted in the Daniel C. Kenney endowment for the Texas A&M men's soccer club. The endowment has grown to over \$61,000 – the single largest endowment of all the Texas A&M sport clubs – and over \$29,000 in scholarships have been distributed to members.

Naturally, the guys on the team are just as big of soccer fans as they are players. If they aren't practicing or playing themselves, you can usually count on seeing them at the Aggie Soccer Stadium supporting Coach G's program.

For anyone who enjoys soccer or supporting A&M sports in general, don't miss one of the best-kept secrets in Aggreland. Head out to the Penberthy Intramural Sports Center and support the Texas A&M men's soccer club.

For more information on the Texas A&M men—July societ team, visit insoccer taniu.edu or reciports.tamii.edu 📆





When sinking their teeth into a wing combo, not very many people realize they're sampling history along with whatever variety of sauce they selected (Hawaiian Parmesan is my personal favorite). Wings 'N More may be considered one of the most popular restaurants in the Bryan/College Station area, but it has far more to offer than just good food. For Mark Dennard '78, the journey to the top of the local restaurant chain has been characterized by history, tradition and the Aggie Spirit.

Dennard came to Texas A&M in 1974 as a part of then-head coach Emory Bellard's third recruiting class.

"You hear about people making good and bad decisions," he explained. "I think signing with A&M was one of the best decisions I have ever made."

As a freshmen he knew he may not see the field very often, but knowing he was a part of the Aggie team maintained his spirit.

"It wasn't all about the X's and O's, it was about the playercoach relationship, as well as the player relationships," he said.
"I've been very fortunate to have some coaches that have made a positive influence in my life."

Midway through his sophomore season, Dennard got the chance to become better acquainted with the field. Self-described as "one of the highlights of his life," the 1975 season would change the course of his future.

"Sometime during the week prior to the SMU game, our starting center got injured," he recalled. "That night, Coach came into my room and indicated to me that I was going to be the starting center as a sophomore that next day."

The season got better from there for Dennard as he was named team captain for the Texas game.

"A&M hadn't heaten Texas since 1967. Being named captain for that game is something that's really special to me to this day. And what made it even sweeter was that we beat Texas that year, 20-10."

In his four years at A&M, Dennard experienced playing on multiple top 20 ranked teams, earning All-Southwest Conference honors along the way. But, it was Coach Bellard that Dennard esteems as having propelled his career to the next level.

When a spot opened up in the Senior Bowl at the last minute, Coach Bellard put Dennard in it – an opportunity that gave him the rare privilege of being coached by a professional coaching staff.

"As a sophomore or junior, I hadn't even thought about playing pro ball," Dennard admits. "Consequently, I had a good game in the Senior Bowl."

It paid off when he was selected by Miami in the 10th round of the 1978 NFL Draft.

After spending his rookie year on injured reserve, Dennard made his impact on the team during his second season, just like he had done at A&M. Nine games into the 1979 season, Jim Langer, Miami's Hall of Fame center, badly injured his knee.

"Coach [Don] Shula entrusted me to fill that position," he said. "My first game was on Monday Night Football against the Houston Oilers."

Dennard went on to play seven seasons with the Dolphins and two with Philadelphia before ending his career with the Cleveland Browns. While in Miami, Dennard made a surprising discovery of what he wanted to do after football was over.

After tasting his first buffalo wings in a players parking lot with some friends, Dennard knew he had to find out more about these tasty treats. Soon he, and a couple of friends were traveling to Fort Lauderdale, FL to sample wings from a friend's local restaurant called Wings 'N Things.

Initially planning on becoming a loan officer once he was done playing football, Dennard quickly realized the restaurant business was for him. However, starting a new wing restaurant in an area that hardly knew what wings were would be harder for him than he realized.

"When we first opened, you could come in the restaurant, shoot off a shot gun and not hit anybody," he said.

Through enduring the difficulties of starting his own business, Mark Dennard realized the value in the lessons he was taught through football – the hardships of two-a-days and intense coaching and demands – gave him his undeniable work ethic.

"Failure was never an option and it still isn't," he said.

The first restaurant, which was located in Houston, put added demands on both Dennard and his family.

"I worked 24-hours a day, 7-days a week and ended up getting an apartment there," he said. "My family would visit me on the weekends."

Determined to see his business through successfully, Dennard worked in every aspect of the business from management to cooking. Once practically a one-man show, Dennard is now more than glad to run the business as a family.

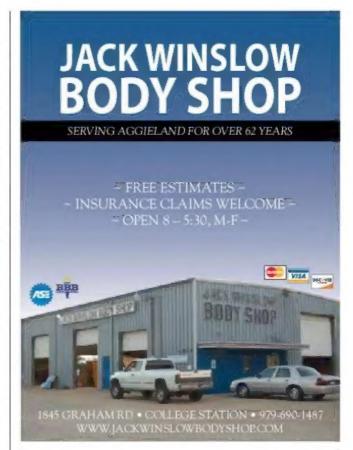
"My son Wes has done a wonderful job as director of operations," the proud father said.

Now, Wings 'N More has grown into a hearty restaurant chain with multiple locations in Houston, The Woodlands, and Bryan/College Station. And, with the continual growth of Aggieland, Dennard is confident that his zesty wings are here to stay. In fact, he has even had requests to expand the business beyond Texas from Aggies that have moved away, and are hoping to enjoy their favorite wings again.

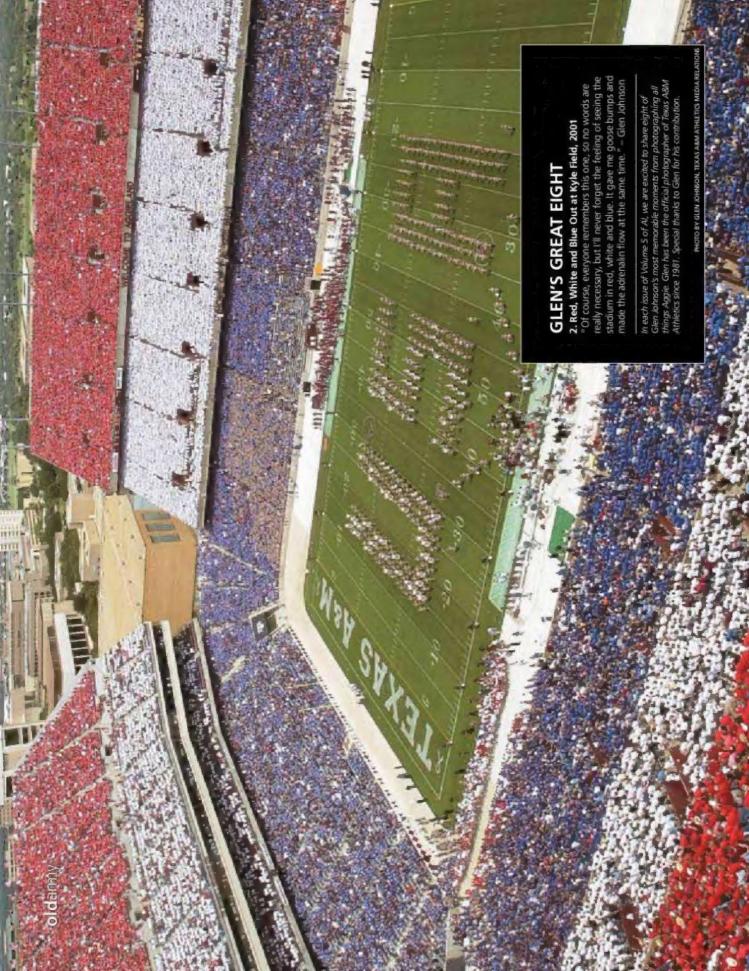
"We are looking to franchise in the future," he admits. "But in the meantime, we're just tending to business."

"You hear about people making good and bad decisions. I think signing with A&M was one of the best decisions I have ever made."

- MARK DENNARD '78









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